GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCING MATERIALS
IN PRINT FORMAT

What is the best type style for printing materials?

Serif type is a typeset where a fine line projects from a main stroke of a letter at the ends of letters. For persons with low vision who utilize magnification devices or software programs, sans-serif type is usually preferred. For persons with low vision, serif type is usually easier to follow than sans-serif (without serif) type. To determine if a printing type is serif or sans-serif, look at the letters below. The "T" and the "H" are serif type, while the "M" and the "N" are sans-serif.

T H   M N

This sentence is printed in serif type, Times font.

This sentence is printed in sans-serif type, Helvetica font.

Some of the more common fonts with serif type are Times, New Century Schoolbook, or Palatino. In general, fancy types should also be avoided. Text in all uppercase or in orator type is more difficult to read and should also be avoided even in headlines.

Serif	Sans Serif
Bookman	Arial
Courier	Avant Garde
New Century Schoolbook	Chicago
Monaco	Geneva
Palatino	Helvetica
Times	N Helvetica Narrow

What does "proportional spacing" mean?

Proportional spacing allows for adjustment between letters to eliminate unneeded and often distracting white (background) space. Proportional spacing is easier to read for all people, but especially so for people with visual impairments. Therefore, a typeface which is proportional, rather than uniform, is suggested.

This sentence is printed in serif type, with proportional spacing, Times font

This sentence is printed in serif type,
with regular spacing, Courier font.

What about type size?

Most books and documents are prepared with a type size of 10 or 12 point type. Materials for general distribution are usually of the 12 point type. Large print materials are most commonly available in 16, 18, or 24 point type. Type points of 16 or 18 are acceptable for most documents. However, if you are typing original materials and do not have a lengthy document, 24 point type is very desirable.

Should paper and color combinations be a consideration?

Color combinations have an effect on the readability of materials by people with low vision. When printing materials, efforts should be made to maximize the contrast and brightness between the letters and the background, without creating a glare. If black ink is used, as is most typical, printing should be on a pastel (especially light yellow), cream, or white colored paper. If colored print is used, avoid contrasting background paper of a shade of the same color. If a reverse printing is used (e.g., white lettering on a dark background), the preferred backgrounds are dark green (such as in highway signs), or dark blue (such as in the International Symbol of Accessibility), rather than black.

Paper with a non-glossy matte finish is preferable to a coated shiny paper, to provide the highest level of contrast without glare.

What about the text of printed materials?

A few extra hints will assist in preparing the most readable documents. If you are using a computer to automatically adjust the font on an original document, re-read your document in a larger font prior to printing. Eliminate, if possible, hyphenations on the right margin, as they make for more difficult concentration in reading. Also, if your document has columns, tables, math formulas, drawings, scientific calculations, etc., automatic enlargement on a computer may result in a skewed document due to formatting. It is important to proof your document to ensure that the text has not been distorted due to the enlargement. You may wish to consider printing a regular document and enlarging it on a copy machine (from 8-1/2" x 11" paper to 11" x 17" paper) to retain the preset formatting.

When copying large print documents, if your text has a significant amount of bold type or drawings, copying on one side of the paper is preferable to minimize bleeding and distractions seen through the paper, unless heavier weight (60 pound) paper is used.

Note: The above information refers to printed material, not building signage. For information on appropriate printed signage requirements, use the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).